mon knowledge in Madras that one US ship, a freigate, which is designed primarily for anti-submarine warfare, which was attached to a bigger fleet and which was engaged during the Vietnam conflict, was stationed in the Madras port for more than fifteen days in the month of December and the crew members of the Indian vessels were entertained on board and sports competitions were conducted, a Press conference also was conducted, and when some Pressmen asked about their next destination, the Captain of that ship said, "For an unknown destination." Madam, I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether there is any secret understanding between India and the United States regarding these nevel warships because the crew members of the vessels, Indian vessels. meant for the so-called job in Sri Lanka of the IPKF, for the operations of the IPKF, were entertained on board this ship. Therefore, I would like to know from the honourable Minister how many ships have made calls at our ports how many ships were stationed in the Indian ports and for what reasons.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Madam, I would like to make it quite clear. First of all, regulations with regard to the entry of foreign ships into the Indian ports are there and they are well established. Foreign naval ships with our permission have been visiting a number of Indian ports for a number of years and there is nothing new in this and no regulation has been violated by any ship. I would like to say that. Even this question does not fall within the purview of what we are discussing now. But I want to assure the House that no regulations have been violated. With regard to the question of having some secret agreement with the United States, I would like to say that my imagination does not stretch as far as that of Mr. Gopalsamy.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: You have go some understanding with regard to the IPKF.

DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA HEPTULLA: Madam, the Question Hour is about to end. I will put my question a little fast. The Iran—Iraq War has entered the 9th year and there has been a news that American warships not only escorted other flag ships but also attacked the Iranian vessels. What is the Government's policy regarding this?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Programme in Bihar

*165. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Bihar tops the list of States having largest population under the poverty line;

(b) whether any indepth study has been made so far to assess the implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes in Bihar;

(c) if so, what are the findings thereof; and

(d) whether any special measures are being contemplated to provide a major thrust to improve the situation in Bihar, and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PLANNING AND THE MINISTER OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER): (a) No, Sir. Bihar has the second largest population under the poverty line amongst the States of the country.

(b) and (c) No indepth study, as such, has been made so far to assess the implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes in Bihar.

However, the Concurrent Evaluation of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is being carried out regularly since October, 1985. The major findings of the latest Concurrent Evaluation Report for January, 1987—September, 1987, in respect of Bihar, are as under:—

(i) As per records, 56 per cent of assisted families belonged to the destitute group (Rs. 0—Rs. 2265), 40 per cent to the very very poor group (Rs. 2266—Rs. 3500) and 4 per cent to the income group of Rs. 3501—Rs. 4800.

(ii) Only 8 per cent cases were identified by the gram sabhas.

(iii) 15 per cent old beneficiaries had crossed the poverty line of Rs .6400 and 45 per cent the income level of Rs. 3500.

(iv) In 82 per cent cases the assets were found to be intact.

(v) The assets had generated incremental income or more than Rs. 2000 in 27 per cent cases, Rs. 1001—Rs. 2000 in 22 per cent cases and Rs. 501—Rs. 4000 in 17 per cent cases.

(d) No special measures are contemplated in the implementation of poverty alleviation programme in Bihar. However, some steps have been taken to improve the operation of these programmes throughout the country (including Bihar):

(i) More wheightage has been given to incidence of poverty in the allocation of Central funds to the States under the major poverty alleviation programmes Integrated Rural Employment Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP).

(ii) Greater emphasis is being laid on better planning, diversification of actvities, and marketing of finished products under IRDP.

(iii) List of works to be taken up under NREP and RLEGP has been revised to ensure creation of economically productive assets in rural areas.

(iv) States have been asked to prepare districtwise plans for maintenance of assets created under NREP AND RLEGP.

(v) Concurrent Evaluation of IRDP and NREP is already being done. It is proposed to extend the same to RLEGP during 1988-89 also.

Discussions between SAARC countries to pool expertise for drinking water

*166. SHRI KALAPNATH RAI:
SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether discussions were held recently among the countries of SAARC to pool their expertise and resources to tackle the problem of providing safe drinking water in such of the rural areas of those countries which do not so far have that provision; and

(b) if so, the results of those discussions and the details of the joint action plan, if any, drawn up in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) Under the SAARC Calendar of Activities for 1988, a Seminar-cum-Workshop on Rural Water Supply was held in Kathmadu from April 3 to 5, 1988.